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Culture tips of online job searching

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Abstract

International context of global economic crisis affects all citizens worldwide, to a lesser or greater extent. Through this paper we intend to develop recommendations that might help every person stay afloat and succeed in the current period, through the online social media space like Twitter and Facebook. In addition, we will provide also national websites examples that promote online job finding services. Thus, by developing a basically online digital job culture and by providing some job finding best practices (tips) we intend to equip as many people as possible we can with strategic job finding online skills, knowledge and competencies. © 2010 Elsevier Ltd. Open access under [CC BY-NC-ND license](http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/).

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1. Introduction

As it is generally agreed, the second generation of Internet based applications (i.e., Web 2.0), can directly engage consumers in the creative process by both producing and distributing information through collaborative writing, content sharing, social networking, social bookmarking, and syndication.

On the other part, due to the greater extend of this technological development, as well as due to the users' participation, people in the 21st century live in a technology and media-suffused environment, marked by various characteristics, including: access to an abundance of information, rapid changes in technology tools and services, and the ability to collaborate and make individual contributions on an unprecedented scale.

In parallel, international context of global economic crisis affects all citizens of the world, to a lesser or greater extent. It seems that every day a new company has layoffs, while friends around us, people in our social networks who were previously in totally secure jobs find themselves in situation of looking for new work and even rethinking their careers. With a large extend, these people are unprepared to cope with current demands for access to the labour market.

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2. The social network(s) (SNS) evolution and context

The Internet and especially the second generation of Internet provide numerous communication spaces in which people meet and could interact each others. Among them, one of the most important was emerged till now are represented by SNS. A SNS service focuses on building online communities of people who share interests and/or activities. A SNS service essentially consists of a representation of each user (often a profile), his/her social links, and a variety of additional services. Most SNS services are web based and provide various ways for users to interact over the internet, such as e-mail and instant messaging servicesⁱ. Thus, social networking is the grouping of individuals into specific groups, like i.e. small rural communities or a neighborhood subdivision. Although social networking is possible in person, especially in the workplace, universities, and other types of organizations, it is most popular online. This is because unlike most educational institutions, organizations or workplaces, the internet is filled with millions of individuals who are looking to meet other people, to gather and share first-hand information and experiences about any number of topics, developing friendships and professional alliances. Moreover, when it comes to online social networking, websites are commonly used. These websites are known as social sites. SNS sites function like an online community of internet users, where they can socialize: create profiles for themselves, reading the profile pages of other members and possibly even contacting them etc.

One major of the popularity of the SNS consists of the number of types of them. Thus, there are more than 400 of them, and a non exhaustive list could be consulted on Wikipediaⁱⁱ, which offer a list of most well-known SNS websites and also a list of the defunct online SNSⁱⁱⁱ. Thus, the online SNS have been become day by day more popular. They are used by any kind of users, with different ages, incomes and educational background^{iv} etc. Thus, some of the online SNS are preferred by youngsters (Bebo, MySpace, Youtube etc.), while others by people on ages 35-44 or 45-54, like Facebook, Twitter, Friendster, LinkedIn or Ning. Consequently, the share of adult Internet users who have a profile on an online SNS has more than quadrupled since 2005, from 8% to 35% in January 2009, but anyhow the youngsters dominate the online SNS over the mature people. Thus, although online SNS owe their initial popularity to support from younger Internet users, the recent statistics also found that it's not only teens who network; the audience of social-networking sites is becoming more diverse and mobile with more and more older enthusiasts leading an active life in cyberspace. According with Nielsen statistics^v, the SNS (together with blogs) are now the 4th most popular online activity ahead of personal email. Thus, if we'll take into consideration the gender distribution, in almost all cases, women dominate social networking sites over men. Moreover, taking into consideration the above facts and statistics, we can assume that the overall landscape of the SNS websites has been dramatically changed during the last three years, as we can also see in the following examples:

- **Facebook** - In the U.S. alone, total minutes spent on SNS sites have increased 83 percent year-over-year. In fact, total minutes spent on Facebook increased nearly 700 percent year-over-year, making it the No. 1 SNS, according with the Nielsen report^{vi}.
- **Twitter** – the most spectaculars ascending curve is gathering by Twitter, Twitter increased by 3.712% to nearly 300 million minutes in the last 2 years, according with the same Nielsen report.
- **32% of European Internet users** had created social networking site profiles and 38% of people aged 15-25 in Europe had profiles on multiple SNS sites^{vii}.

Consequently, both of the above online SNS are becoming more used for more and more purposes, both by individual users and business organizations or institutions. As two-thirds of the world's Internet population visits SNS sites, we are totally agreed with John Burbank^{viii}, CEO of Nielsen Online, which said that "SNS has become a fundamental part of the global online experience". Because of those, this year in PC World's annual list of the "100 Best Products of the Year," Twitter and Facebook ranked in at #5 and #16 respectively, and for good reason. These two services, both of which are completely free, have revolutionized social networking and the way that people communicate in the 21st Century. Moreover, in reference to the future of SNS and blogs, Burbank also predicts that "social networking will continue to alter not just the global online landscape, but the consumer experience at large."

3. The SNS job searching current context

Most of the individuals use the SNS sites to meet new friends, make connections, and upload personal information. From youngsters to elders, every individual want to share personal information, having a specific purpose in mind or only the intention to share experiences and to collaborate around personal and professional issues, ideas, and interests. Therefore, social networking sites have become mainstream and widespread and,

consequently, more and more organizations start to figure out how to benefit from this kind of social media services. Apart from the previously mentioned characteristics' of the SNS, they also give every person the chance to network with the colleagues and others, even if they did not meet before.

Moreover, connecting with some people and services not only gives to an unemployed person the sense of belonging to a community, but also creates job finding opportunities. Just a few years ago, most of us could upload the resume to one of the top job sites and, with a few mouse clicks, consider the job search well under way. Today, that isn't enough. The job market is becoming increasingly competitive, especially during the current global economic crisis. Accordingly, unemployment has risen rapidly and there is mounting pressure on existing employment. In addition, the fact that many more people are out of work today than this time last year (or 3 years ago) also means that more people are searching for jobs. Moreover, across Europe and other developed states, we are confronting also with the ageing population and technological change, and all mean that both labor markets – and the skills people need – change ever faster. Accordingly, some of them start to consider upgrading their education^x and job status. It is their responsibility to grow their career, not only the employers'. With the right education, they could be among the successful job seekers in the next period of time and they could have a better chance to keep the current job among other well qualified competitors.

Today it is really easy to jump online and find job openings. After all, there are many job sites and sources for classified ads and within an hour a motivated job seeker can locate and apply for a dozen or more jobs. Accordingly, the hiring managers are overwhelmed with applications and consequently, they are looking at new and different ways to recruit online. Hiring has changed and so has job searching. Now, job seekers need to be prepared to use all the online job search tools to their advantage. Thus, in addition to job searching the traditional way, the employers (and in direct correlation the job seekers) need to be actively networking online and taking advantage of the ways social media have been emerged. Accordingly, for the unemployed people it's much more complex than it used to be, when they could just send a resume and wait for a phone call to set up an interview.

All of this means that any kind of user need to do more than just posting the resume on different specialized job sites, although they still can be an effective part of the job search process. Any kind of user never knows where they might find someone who can help with the job search process. That's why it's important to be open about the fact that they are a job searcher and they'll need assistance, help, opportunities and, of course, fortune. In addition, a good idea is to search online for any kind of new opportunities. Candidates should therefore explore all possible avenues to pinpoint vacancies that interest them. Searches could include: online searches, recruitment agencies, government websites, notices and posters, organizational newsletters and websites, networking among friends, colleagues, family and acquaintances etc. Moreover, developing a list with potential employers (according with the wisdom job and, of course, the qualifications) and consequently, find related companies who don't offer a job^{xi} and to send a letter of interest to inquire about potential openings and include an updated resume it is another strategy for trying to find a job. Anyhow, it is important to look online and see who's hiring, but don't let the hunt stop there, get proactive and spend time for creating a personal branding, using Internet as medium. Using social media tools and services like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Digg etc. for keeping informed, it is a "must do it"^{xii}. Even LinkedIn is an important SNS, with more than 50 million users worldwide, it is a SNS more oriented on business, mainly used for professional networking, but it could then be used as well to find jobs, people and business opportunities. Facebook and Twitter are fundamental different, because they are emerged from different purposes, to create and maintain relationship between contacts. Due to their popularity they become used even for other purposes, like for examples job finding, and consequently they will be detailed in the following sections.

4. The Facebook context

With more than 350 million active users and the adding of more than half a million of users every day, Facebook is the biggest SNS in the world. Due to its development and usage, Facebook is now the most popular communication tool. Moreover, Facebook is already the Internet's ultimate time waster, with users spending more time on it than any other website including Google, YouTube and Yahoo. Founded in February 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg initially as an exclusive network for Harvard students, in 2006, Facebook opened to anyone with an email address. Now, due to its huge development, Facebook could be considered the 4th largest country in the world. From a demographic perspective, Facebook is used more by "mature" people (age 45-54), but the fastest growing demographic on Facebook are 35 years. On the Facebook the registered users could benefit by a myriad of features like photo and video sharing, instant messaging, applications, fan pages, user groups, event planning etc. They could

update their profile and their status, could create a network of friends to interact, could also insert links, share news, blog entries, notes, photo albums.

Thus, the SNS Facebook could be successfully used for a variety of purposes, including searching for a job. Accordingly, using notes in Facebook it is a method to post a much more content than on a status update and a note tends to stay on people's screens longer than a status update, too. Notes are also used for creating a link for every updated post for the personal blog, and thus, every people could open the entire post or comment and that the content becomes even more viral. Moreover, using regular status update about the job status, the friends as well as the friends of friends and so on will be informed and will react if will have any related information. Another useful operation is to tag the friends if the content is somehow related with them and consequently, their friends will be alerted to the post, and the content message will spread more quickly. Thus, online social networking can help you find employment opportunities and build also your career.

Due to the popularity of Facebook which over the past couple of years has skyrocketed, and due the fact that since the year 2007 searches for SNS have increased by roughly 300%, even employers and other organizations are using Facebook. Thus, the users of Facebook should also be aware of how their Facebook profile could be used by potential employers. Recruiters evaluating young professionals that are applying for jobs are now looking at their Facebook or other online social pages for the applicants profiles, making decisions based on the way that person has portrayed themselves in photo's, and interaction with others.

Other employers are actively searching for passive candidates, in order to find the best people to hire, regardless of whether the candidate has expressed interest in their company, or not. In this respect, besides the above facts, it is necessary to make the personal information (resume, skills, experience, etc.) findable when companies are looking for candidates. Accordingly, it is need to edit and tweak the resume and the other information that people have online, in order to show up in the search results generated by employers who may have a job that's a good fit.

With more than 1,6 million active pages, or 3,5 million of events, Facebook attract users from over 180 different countries from around the world to participate in this massive user community, being the second most-visited website in the world and one of the most revolutionary products that the world has seen in a long time.

5. The Twitter context

Aside from Facebook, Twitter is perhaps the most important and interesting social media platform on the web. Founded in 2006, the microblogging platform Twitter has now more than 32 million active users. Twitter is a social networking and microblogging service that allows users to post their latest updates. An update is limited by 140 characters and can be posted through three methods: web form, text message, or instant message. Users of this radical new service can follow whomever they want, from their closest friends and family members, to their friends of friends of friends, to world news sources that are delivering the latest breaking news. Thus, in just 140 characters or less, users send out "Tweets" that answer the one simple question Twitter asks: "What's happening?" Like for Facebook, regarding the demographic distribution, Twitter has the 35 – 44 age group accounted for largest majority of users at 29% and 25-34 year olds following closely behind at second.

Due to the overload of information, people want to communicate more quickly and Twitter is somehow a good answer for this situation, in fact Twitter has been demonstrated that in the difficult and short period of time it is a preferred online medium for the distribution of the rapid information worldwide (i.e. Moldavian political crisis from April 2009, the Iranian election, the death of Michael Jackson etc.). Moreover, in March 2009, the Nielsen company blog ranked Twitter as the fastest-growing site in the Member Communities category for February 2009. With a monthly growth of 1,382 percent, Twitter is ranked as one of the 50 most popular websites worldwide by Alexa's web traffic analysis, being also ranked as #5 on PC World's "100 Best Products of the Year" in 2009. Available now on almost every platform imaginable, this unprecedented service is certainly deserving of its ranking. As Twitter is growing in popularity, the people at Twitter are paying attention to other purposes for using it, like i.e. job search. One important element of using Twitter for job searching purposes is that it allows users to connect with people they don't know, based on common interests. Twitter can be used to post a job, poke around for one, bone up on a potential boss, or simply keep the friends updated on the job hunt. Thus, by sending an occasional tweet that explains the kind of job people are looking for could yield responses from recruiters. People can also seek jobs being promoted on the site by searching for phrases like "job opening."

In order to do all of this and to contact also employers quickly, first step is to create the profile successfully. In this respect, it is recommended to use as Twitter name the personal name (it is possible anyhow to have multiple accounts) because it will help during the search engine results; for the 'More Info URL', it is indicated to put the

URL of the personal blog, LinkedIn profile or other brand-reinforcing website. For the ‘One Line Bio’, put the most important keywords first. (probably the profession and location- that could be the place the user lives or where want to work) and other words user want to describe him/her. If it is not enough space, the background picture could be customized to include more pictures and links to the personas’ professional endeavors.

In addition, it is important to build a good Twitter personal reputation and to be aware to choose the content of the tweets very carefully. Thus, tweet daily but tweet on topic you are interested on, tweet on the topic using relevant keywords which would include: the names of your target employers; the industry’s or profession’s jargon; appropriate professional and industry associations and groups (names and acronyms); important company and individual names in the industry (particularly your target employers, when appropriate); hash mark tags for specific Twitter groups and topics are usually important keywords, like #jobseekers for tweets about job search etc.

Employers are using Twitter, too. As a lot of companies aren’t advertising jobs in traditional ways, but using Twitter the companies could target easily recruitment ads and “follow” potential candidates online. On the other part, many recruiters watch the Twitter community, keeping an eye out for ideal candidates.

Both people looking for a job and recruiters or employers could also benefit by using other websites related to Twitter, like TwitterJobSearch.com, Jobshouts.com, Jobtweet.de, JobAngels.org etc. Anyhow, it’s difficult to know how many people are actually finding work this way. But it’s obvious from interviews with job-seekers, employers, coaches and entrepreneurs that the Twitter phenomenon is fundamentally changing the way people search for jobs in this difficult period of economic crisis. As general rules, people have to build a profile to impress, a follower list before they’ll need them, and not eventually they must be aware with the content posted on tweets.

6. Conclusion

SNS are now widespread and individuals, company and policymakers cannot afford to overlook it. More and more individuals, companies and organizations are part of different SNS community and moreover, the SNS are now being used as reference checks by human resource personnel.

Using SNS, people have a concrete opportunity for creating a personal branding, a marketing for promotion of oneself, using Internet as medium. Their personal reputation online depends both on the controlled content posted on the SNS and on the involuntary content posted on other several online sites (resources) like: commenting, blog posts, membership on different online groups etc. Accordingly, we must be extremely precaution with the online content posted on the SNS: even we think it is private, it can be read by many: searches on SNS allow also employers to look into what is done “after hours”, socially or privately by the applicant, because there are cases when the employers want to see more besides the resume (considered by some as a snapshot), other personal and additional information that could be found online about job applicants.

Consequently, prior to applying for a job, applicants might consider taking a close look at what is posted on the Internet about them or others and identify what potential employers are likely to view, because till now, apart from the “wow” of the SNS, there is also an ugly part, there are plenty of examples with people who did not get a specific job because of their online content posted in different circumstances and websites.

On the other part, another important thing to underline is that using such types of Web 2.0 social communities (SNS), the unemployed can learn in an informal way about finding jobs, being also an effective way to engage and motivate people in their job searching process.

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^{iv} A demographic distribution for the most known and used social networks as well as the related traffic are detailed by Ignite,

^v http://server-uk.imrworldwide.com/pdimages/Global_Faces_and_Networked_Places-A_Nielsen_Report_on_Social_Networkings_New_Global_Footprint.pdf

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^{viii} <http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/global/social-networking-new-global-footprint/>

^{ix} According to an article from CNNMoney.com

(http://money.cnn.com/2009/12/14/news/economy/moving_job_relocating.fortune/index.htm?section=money_latest&utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+rs%2Fmoney_latest+%28Latest+News%29), for every job opening across this country there is an average of 6.3 applicants.

^x A good idea is to learn something new each year, to cultivate your career each day. Due to the rapid technological change, the globalization of services and workplaces etc., it is difficult anyhow to stay current with newer technologies/services and development practices.

^{xi} One reason for not advertise job openings online is that many companies get plenty of resumes without advertising and they don’t like being overwhelmed with calls, emails and faxes.

^{xii} The hard part is to keep the correct balance and to collect the necessary information without wasting the time.